




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR GYMPIE**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 February 2016

**TACKLING ALCOHOL-FUELLED VIOLENCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL;  
LIQUOR AND FAIR TRADING LEGISLATION (RED TAPE REDUCTION)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (9.04 pm): I rise to speak on the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and the Liquor and Fair Trading Legislation (Red Tape Reduction) Amendment Bill. This is about balancing the primary responsibility of governments legislating and regulating for community interests. The point here is that we live in a society that values individual autonomy and freedom. We dislike paternalism, which is implicit in this government's proposed lockout laws. There is a danger in treating our population as infants, as children incapable of making their own decisions. Nanny-state regulations and bureaucratic red tape are becoming an increasingly significant barrier to a vibrant Australian culture. This Labor government has a love of both. The key question is: what should be the role of the state and, more precisely, the role of the government?

When we approach legislation we should ask ourselves: what do we want to achieve? Can we achieve this with the tools we have? What is the best and most prudent way to achieve our goals? In this legislation we owe it to Queenslanders to be very honest when assessing the data and not cherry-pick to suit the causes of individuals no matter how worthy their sentiment. This is where the government has got it wrong. There is no convincing evidence that these laws can achieve what the government has been promising. Once again, the government has come up with a proposal that is one dimensional and narrow—proposals that are designed purely to appease the wishes of the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. If the government truly wanted to tackle alcohol fuelled violence, as shown in our night precincts, it would have embraced a multifaceted approach. That multifaceted approach was being realised under the Safe Night Out Strategy. It followed months of consultation and discussion about the issue of alcohol and drug related violence. The \$44.5 million strategy was a comprehensive plan that included more than 60 initiatives—initiatives which were designed to change the culture that has developed in Queensland. It also focused on individual responsibility. It did not seek to punish the majority of people who do the right thing for the sins of the few.

In my own experience as a councillor on the Gympie Regional Council I saw the success of liquor accords. They did not require these nanny-state lockout laws. The liquor accords were developed with clear and detailed input from local hoteliers, owners of licensed premises, police and council to achieve local solutions to real or potential issues. As I said earlier, we owe it to Queenslanders to be very honest when assessing the data and not cherry-pick to suit the causes of individuals, no matter how worthy their sentiment. There is no reliable data on which to base the legislation—so much so that the committee has had to recommend that the government start collecting data now. There are no grounds on which the government can honestly argue that the data is there to support its position.

The figures presented to the committee did not come from Queensland. They did not reflect our unique position as a decentralised state. In many cases the figures were quite old. They were not able to establish the relationship between people arriving at emergency departments and alcohol related violence. When we visited New South Wales, the committee was advised by Mr George Souris, the minister who introduced the New South Wales laws, that the laws were specifically targeted for the Kings Cross and Newcastle experiences. They were targeted for only certain areas. He pointed out that it was not a statewide approach and cautioned us about implementing a statewide approach in Queensland.

Different communities have different needs, expectations, demographics and conditions. The explanatory notes stated that alcohol is related to around 3,000 deaths and 65,000 hospitalisations each year Australia-wide. The Attorney-General's own department confirmed to the committee that those figures are from a Melbourne study that is more than 15 years old. They also confirmed that nowhere do those figures specify the relationship between those hospitalisations and alcohol related violence. Dr David Rosengren, the Chair of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, Queensland faculty, confirmed to the committee that—

... there is an absolute lack of clear and definite data around many of the arguments that have been put forward ... It is close to impossible for us to truly quantify the impact of alcohol on the community simply because we do not have any mechanisms, certainly in the health system in Queensland, to actually record it or document it with any certainty. Therefore, to rely on arguments of absolute evidence for and against is significantly challenging, as is often the case with many of our public community health and safety initiatives that we have tackled as complex problems in the past.

The government is using questionable data to justify its approach. Only last week we saw Dr Don Weatherburn, the director of the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, contradict the oft-quoted claim that lockout laws in New South Wales have caused a reduction in assaults. He pointed out that assaults had already been declining long before the lockout laws and that the reduction was a continuation of that downward trend. This is a complex issue which requires a multidimensional approach. The government is fixated on the magic silver bullet. They are looking for a direct, effortless and immediate solution to a problem. They are being simplistic and populist in creating the illusion of a miraculous fix by way of their magic wand. They are not being genuine with the families of Queensland. If they were genuine, then there would be no exemptions for casino precincts. There would be one rule throughout the state for all precincts.

The government would have addressed the issue of displacement, of moving the problem from one area to another, of the culture of violence, of the need for night-time public transport and of ID scanners. They would have addressed the problem of preloading. Only last week I heard on the radio that the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines told a meeting in North Queensland that lockout laws will help to reduce preloading. I heard the Attorney-General claim that people will go to these bars and nightclubs earlier. I suggest that this legislation will be useless in tackling preloading.

If the government really wanted to tackle violence it would address the issue of recreational, illicit and synthetic drug fuelled violence. It would give weight to the survey from the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education which identified the top four initiatives needed to address issues around excessive alcohol consumption: increasing penalties for people involved in alcohol related violence; closed-circuit television in and around licensed premises; increasing police numbers at times and places where alcohol related violence is greater; and more public transport options in areas where there are pubs, clubs and bars. If the government is genuine in its intentions, then it would reconsider and reinstate the key elements of the Safe Night Out Strategy which provided multidimensional solutions to the task. This government cannot help itself. It somehow believes that creating unnecessary regulation is providing good government. It somehow believes that government is about interfering, and it believes it is not necessary to back up its measures with proper research and evidence.

It is the same with the Liquor and Fair Trading Legislation (Red Tape Reduction) Amendment Bill 2015. I want to confine my remarks to campdrafting. I have had a long association with campdrafting, which is another community based activity which showcases the wide variety of skills within regional Australia. Currently for other than a small regional show a community liquor permit, or CLP, must be obtained if alcohol is to be sold. A CLP can only be granted if the commissioner is satisfied that the proceeds will go to the benefit of the community, and the event must start and end on the same day. The bill seeks to put campdrafting on the same footing as a small regional show, so that alcohol may be sold for campdrafting fundraising events that go on for more than eight hours and are held up to three consecutive days. A small regional show does not need to obtain a CLP, even if it sells alcohol for more than eight hours and it lasts a number of days. Campdrafting events are also often held over multiple days and tend to sell alcohol for more than eight hours.

Government members have opposed introducing a liquor permit exemption for campdrafting events. They have argued that the exemption would not create a responsible atmosphere for the service of alcohol and would not be an appropriate influence on the amount of alcohol consumed at these events. Campdrafting is family orientated, it is run by reputable people and it largely self-regulates. During the committee's deliberations I specifically asked the Department of Justice and Attorney-General for evidence. Let me quote the exchange. I asked—

Is the Department aware of any problems currently occurring in relation to the sale of or availability of alcohol at campdrafting events?

Guess what the executive director of the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulations said. He replied—

No. We have no evidence of any problems there. They are largely family-type events, so we generally do not have problems with those sorts of events.

Once again we have a government seeking to regulate where there has been no evidence of any problem. All of us here want to do the right thing, but regulating for the sake of regulating creates more problems. Treating Queenslanders like juveniles is not doing the right thing. Creating a nanny state is not doing the right thing. Not letting communities take control when they know the nature and extent of their local issues is not doing the right thing. Legislating and regulating without any clear evidence of problems is not doing the right thing. You cannot do the right thing if you are not given correct and accurate data. You cannot fix this complex problem with piecemeal solutions.

We owe it to all those not-for-profit hardworking campdraft committees to reject the government's recommendations to remove the exemption for campdrafting in the Liquor and Fair Trading Legislation (Red Tape Reduction) Bill. We owe it to all Queenslanders to reject the Tackling Alcohol-Fuelled Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Mr Deputy Speaker, I stand by the LNP's Safe Night Out Strategy as the best method to reduce alcohol fuelled violence in this state.